

Where'd You Go, Bernadette

by Maria Semple

Discussion Questions

1. *Where'd You Go, Bernadette* is told from the point of view of a daughter trying to find her missing mother. Why do you think the author chose to tell the story from Bee's perspective? What light does it shed on the bond between Bernadette and Bee?
2. What are your thoughts on Bernadette's character? Has she become unhinged or has she always been a little crazy? What, if anything, do you think sent her over the edge? Have you ever had a moment in your own life that utterly changed you, or made you call into question your own sanity?
3. When Bernadette relocates from Los Angeles to Seattle, she must cope with being a transplant in a new city. Have you ever moved, or even stayed put but switched jobs, and had to adjust to an entirely different culture? What was it like?
4. The idea of going to Antarctica becomes too much for an already frazzled Bernadette to bear, but the trip itself, surprisingly, turns out to be exactly what she needs to get back on track. How do other characters in the novel experience their own breakthroughs? Which character is most transformed?
5. How are Audrey Griffin and Bernadette Fox more alike than they realize?
6. Bernadette often behaves as if she is an outsider. Do you think she is? If so, do you think her feelings of being an outsider are self-imposed, or is she truly different from the other members of her community? Do you ever feel like an outsider?
7. The book has a very playful structure. Do you think it works? Why do you think the author chose it rather than a more straightforward, traditional structure? Think about other books with unusual structures and how their formats influenced your reading experience.
8. What do you think of Bernadette and Elgie's marriage? Is it dysfunctional? Is there real love there? How has their marriage changed over time? Think about romantic relationships you've been in that have evolved, positively or negatively, and why.
9. *Where'd You Go, Bernadette* is, at its core, a story about a woman who disappears, both literally and figuratively. Were you able to relate to the book? How and why? Do you feel Bernadette's disappearance was unique, or do all women, in a sense, disappear into motherhood and marriage?
(Questions issued by publisher.)

